

HIGHGATE CEMETERY.

SIDNEY CHARLES
CONNOR

Highgate Cemetery

Facing the future

Highgate Cemetery is one of the most famous in the world, with almost 200 years of rich history. Since it opened in 1839 more than 173,000 people have been buried in around 53,000 graves.

After the original owners found it was no longer profitable to run, the cemetery was rescued by the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust, a registered charity. The Trust is planning a major project to conserve and unlock Highgate Cemetery's remarkable landscape of memories, strengthen its resilience to the effects of climate change and enhance the visitor experience.



Highgate Cemetery Conservation Plan

The Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust published the 'Highgate Cemetery Conservation Plan' in 2019. It sets out the history and significance of this special place, with policies on how it will be looked after in the future.

There are three main strands to the policies within the conservation plan:

Trees, monuments and buildings will be better looked after

The cemetery will continue to function as an active burial ground

Visiting will be easier, and more rewarding

Ensuring the future of the cemetery

The Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust's conservation project will unlock the cemetery's potential, enhance its role in the community, and conserve its landscape, monuments and buildings.

Decaying buildings will be restored and new structures built as the Trust looks to welcome new, diverse audiences. New facilities will improve the experience of visiting and volunteering.

There will be more opportunities for local people to learn and develop skills, meet neighbours and improve their health.

The design team

A multi-disciplinary design team has been appointed to bring the Conservation Plan to life

Gustafson
Porter +
Bowman

Landscape architects

HOPKINS
ARCHITECTS

Architects

Alan Baxter

Conservation advice

usefulprojects
part of the Useful Simple Trust

Sustainability

BARKER
LANGHAM

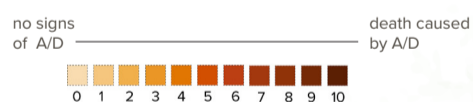
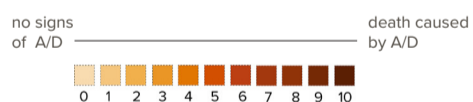
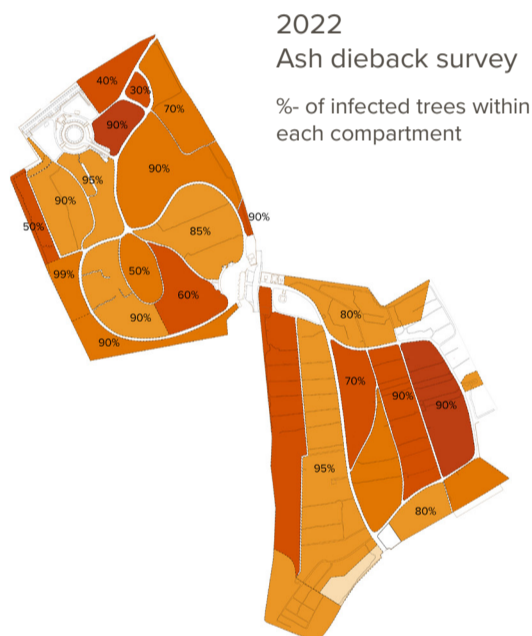
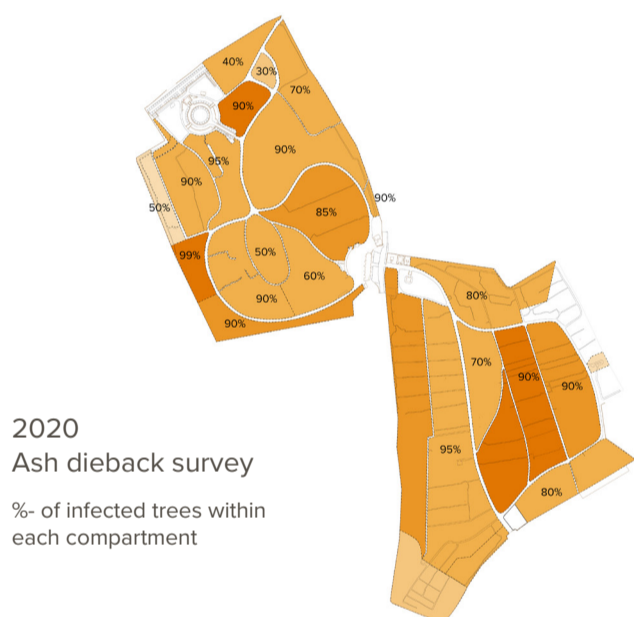
Activities and
interpretation



Community engagement

Diseased trees

Trees are an integral part of the cemetery landscape. They provide shade, are home to wildlife and contribute to biodiversity. But they are also increasingly affected by pests and diseases.



Ash dieback

Ash dieback is caused by a fungus which originated in Asia. The fungus grows inside the tree, eventually blocking its water transport systems, causing it to die. Our native ash species have no natural defence against the disease as they did not evolve with it.

How is it affecting the cemetery?

Ash is the dominant tree species. Diseased trees are falling unpredictably, destroying monuments and potentially causing harm to people. The monoculture of ash is limiting the potential for other healthy trees to grow and reach maturity.

What is the cemetery doing to address it?

Surveys to establish the extent, severity and progression of the disease have been carried out. To protect our visitors, monuments and other healthy trees, diseased trees will have to be dismantled. Mature and semi-mature ash trees which display resistance to the disease will be retained and new trees, more resilient to the effects of climate change, will be planted.



Removing trees

Due to their proximity to thousands of monuments, the only safe way to remove diseased trees is laborious and costly: each tree must be climbed and cut into sections small enough that one person can lower them to the ground using a rope.

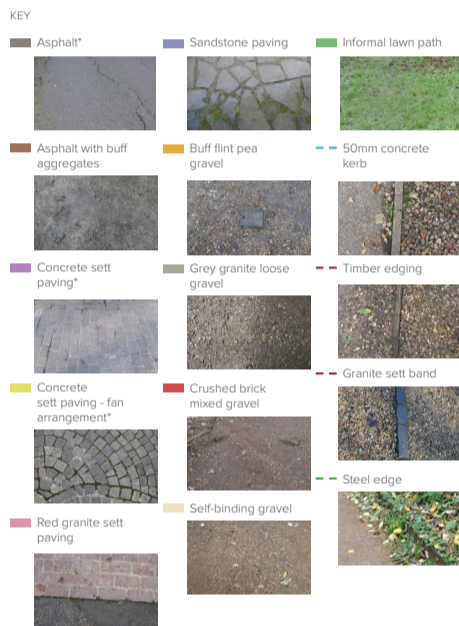
Ash dieback will kill up to 80% of ash trees across the UK!

Crumbling paths

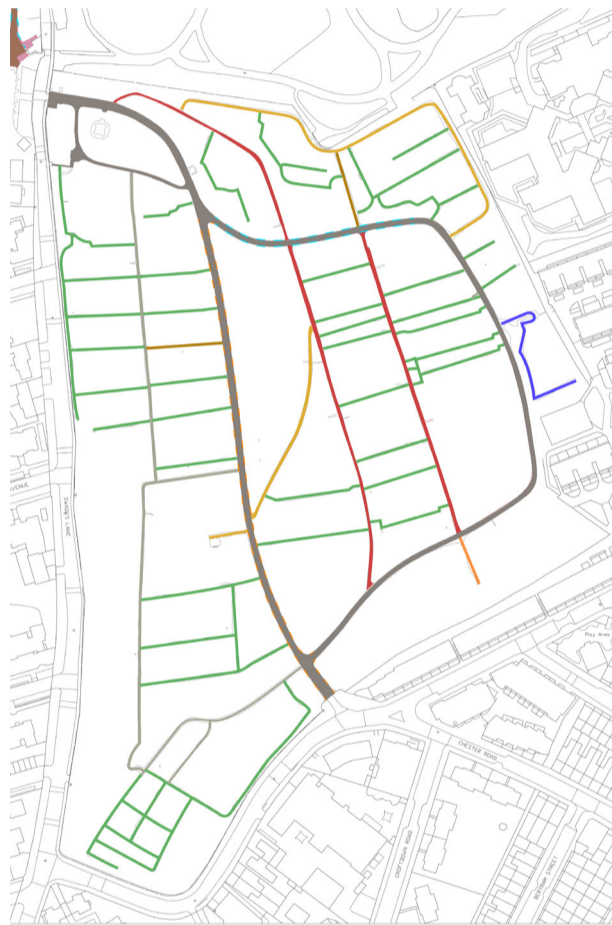
Like other historic cemeteries, Highgate's paths were originally gravel. But the steep hillside has meant they eroded easily, and numerous different surfaces have been tried out over the years in search of a solution. Increasingly heavy rainfall is only making things worse.

The gravel paths contribute to the cemetery's distinctive character and contrast to the pavements outside. However, the unique aesthetic of the paths needs to be made functional for grave owners and visitors.

West

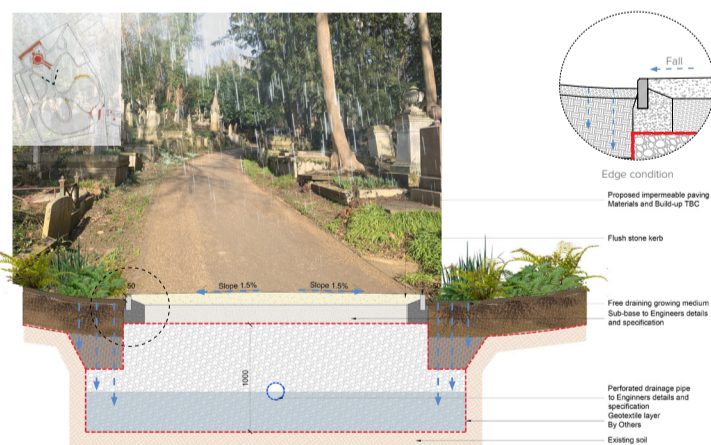


East



Sustainable drainage

On major paths, new surfaces could help deal with the greater volume of water released during increasingly frequent storms. Free draining soils and gravel either side of the paths could aid water retention and minimise run-off.



Accessibility

Highgate Cemetery welcomes thousands of visitors each year. Some paths are inaccessible and difficult to navigate. This is a result of varying gradients and different materials.

While there is little scope for introducing new paths, improvements can be made to the surface of the existing ones to make them more suitable for wheelchair users. More resting points will be provided.

Different paths will be given different treatments according to their traffic, ensuring the surfaces are durable and in keeping with the character of the cemetery.



— Non-accessible slope, steeper than 5%
— Accessible slope, shallower than 5%



A landscape design rooted in the past

Extensive research has been done to understand the history and evolution of the landscape of Highgate Cemetery. Old maps and images were scoured for what they would reveal of its past appearance before it became overgrown.

Historic view:



Today:



Historic planting: West side

Yews
Conifers

Chestnuts
Weeping trees
Conifers

Wood mix

Elms

Highgate Cemetery, 1841. London edited by Charles Knight (Virtue, c. 1880)

Highgate Church from the Cemetery, nd (HCA)

Highgate Cemetery (1870s taken by Dr Oakeshott, part of HLSI collection)

View in the cemetery, Anonymous, 1830-1850 (c.) (c.)

View towards the courtyard and the Colonnade, engraving, 1888

View towards the Colonnade, nd

View of Highgate and Kentish Town Cemetery, Unknown, 1839

Main path looking up to St Michael's Church, probably 1857-58

Historic planting: East side

Linear arrangement of trees

Linear arrangement of trees

Wood mix

Preparing flowers and the glass houses - East Side 1890s top :Photo (1902) bottom :Map (1894)

Highgate Cemetery, East, 1939 picture

Note: The photograph shows rows of poplar trees that don't exist today.

Chinese visitors studying the tomb of Karl Marx, 1970-1985, John Gay

An elevated view looking south across the East Side with the London skyline visible in the distance, John Gay, 1977-1979

Note: Many of the trees in the background are old lapsed pollarded Lime trees

Ordnance Survey

The first edition Ordnance Survey at 25" to the mile accurately shows the positions of individual trees, tree groups, shrubberies and boundary belts. The overlays in red show the significant trees in 2023. The coloured plans show how the balance of open glades to more dense planting will be phased in.



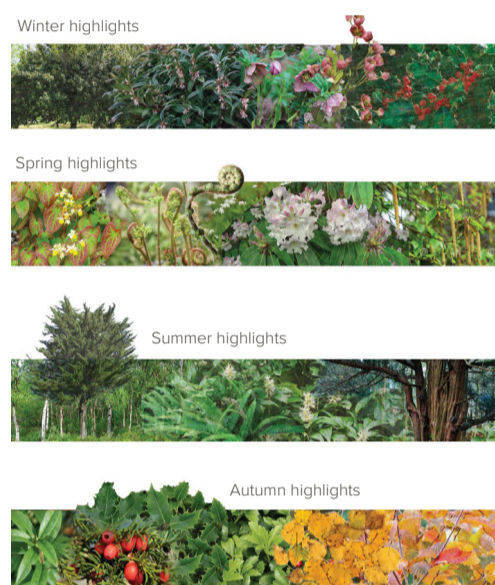
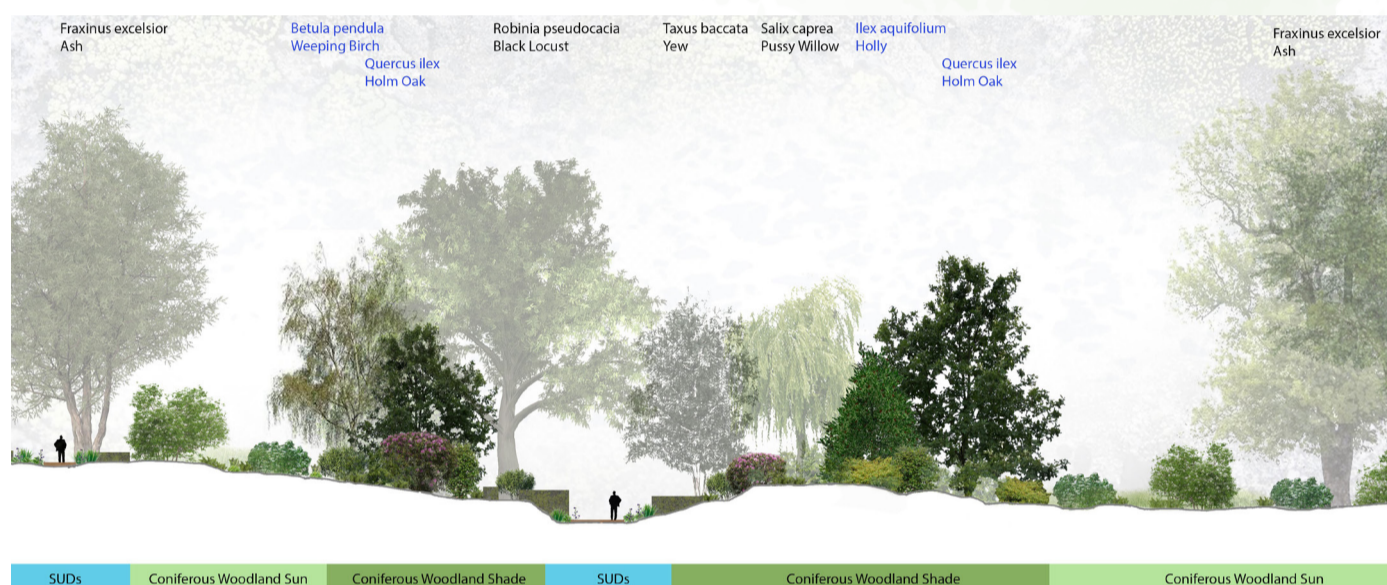
- KEY
- Coniferous/Broadleaf Woodland Shade Mix
 - Coniferous/Broadleaf Woodland Sun Mix
 - Broadleaf Woodland Shade Mix
 - Broadleaf Woodland Sun Mix
 - Wet Woodland
 - Meadow/Grassland
 - Native and Ornamental planting
 - Embankments
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems are also proposed on one or both sides of the path

Adding beauty and biodiversity

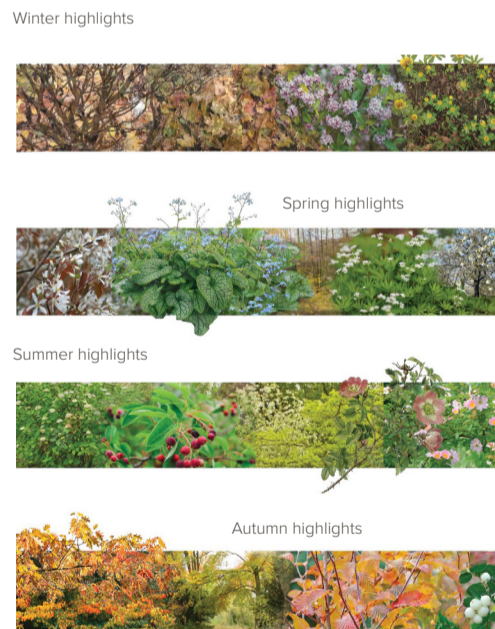
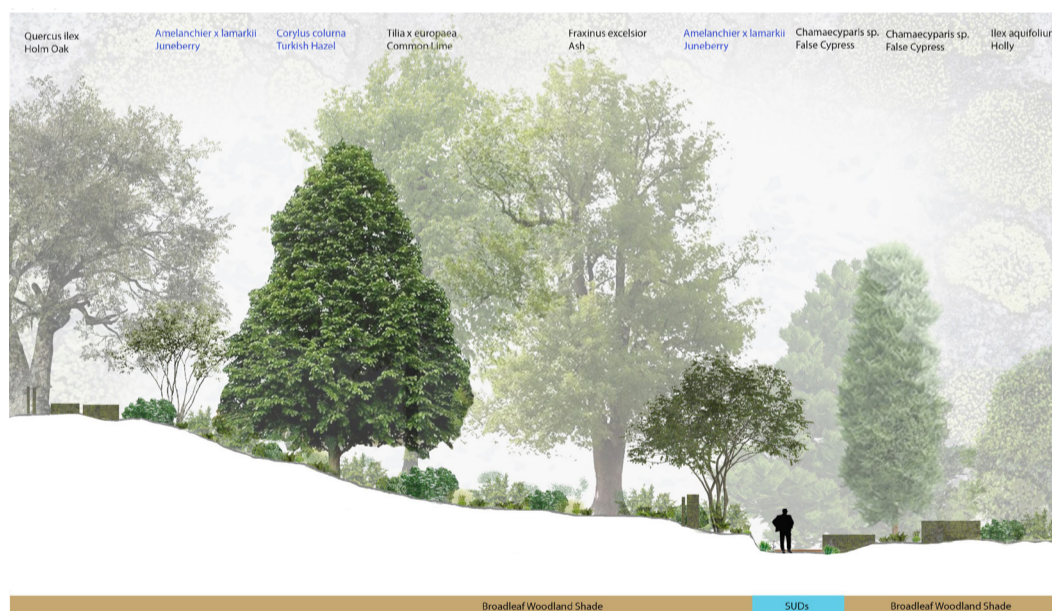
New designs for the landscape at Highgate Cemetery are being developed by Gustafson Porter + Bowman and Jo Thompson Landscape & Garden Design.

A greater variety plants and trees will create a series of different environments and enhance biodiversity. Below are design ideas across the cemetery accompanied by types of planting you may see through the seasons.

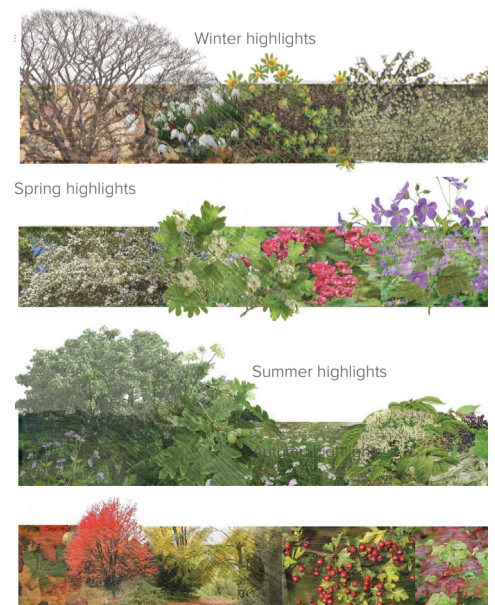
Plant habitat creation: West side



Plant habitat creation: West side

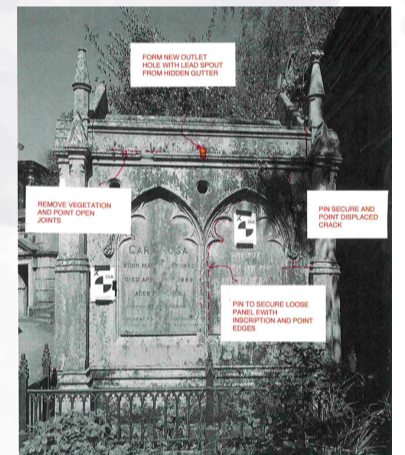
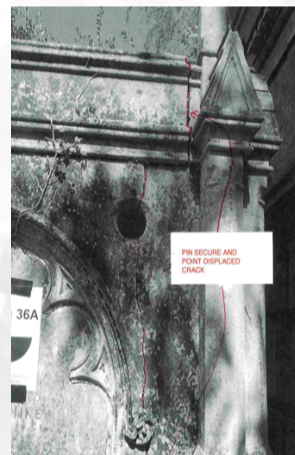
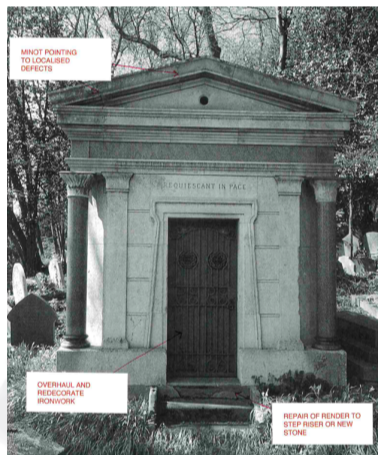
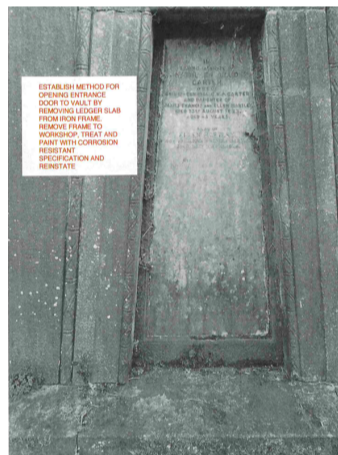
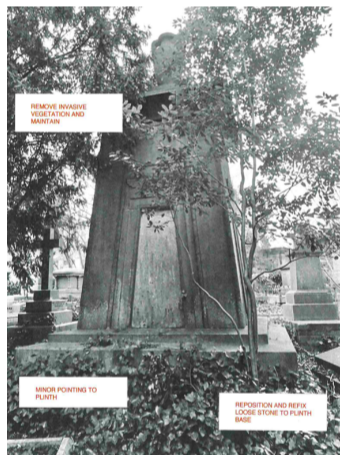
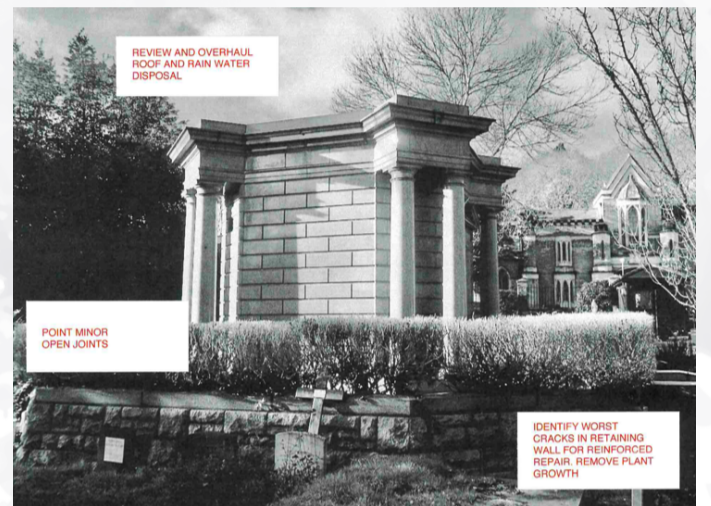
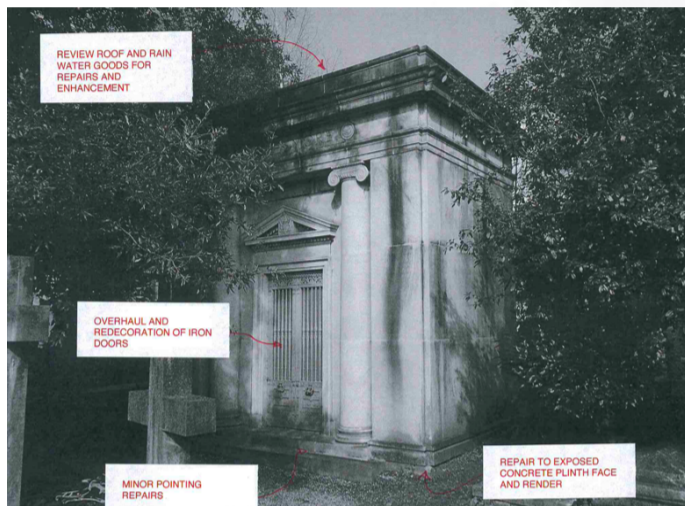


Plant habitat creation: East side



Historic buildings and monuments

Some of the structures at Highgate Cemetery are the direct responsibility of the Trust, such as the chapels, Colonnade, Egyptian Avenue, Lebanon Circle and Terrace Catacombs. Others, such as all the mausolea and monuments, remain in private hands. Priority for conservation will depend on their significance, need and the Trust's resources.



Restoring the chapels

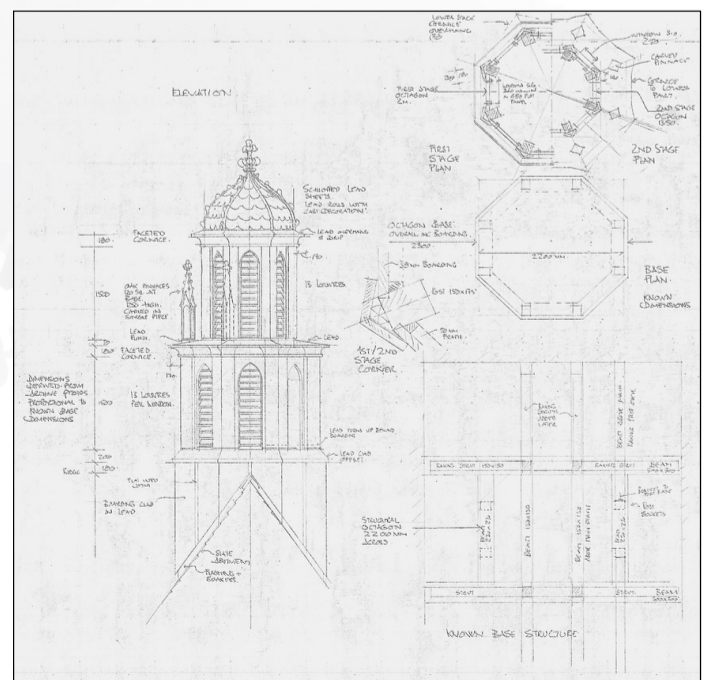
The pair of chapels at the entrance to the Cemetery were once a grand architectural statement. Their appearance is now underwhelming since the pinnacles and cupola have been removed. The magnificence could be regained if the structures were restored.

The interior of the Dissenters' Chapel, converted to offices in the 1980s, could be reopened to the public once again as a space for education and exhibitions.

Proposed



Existing

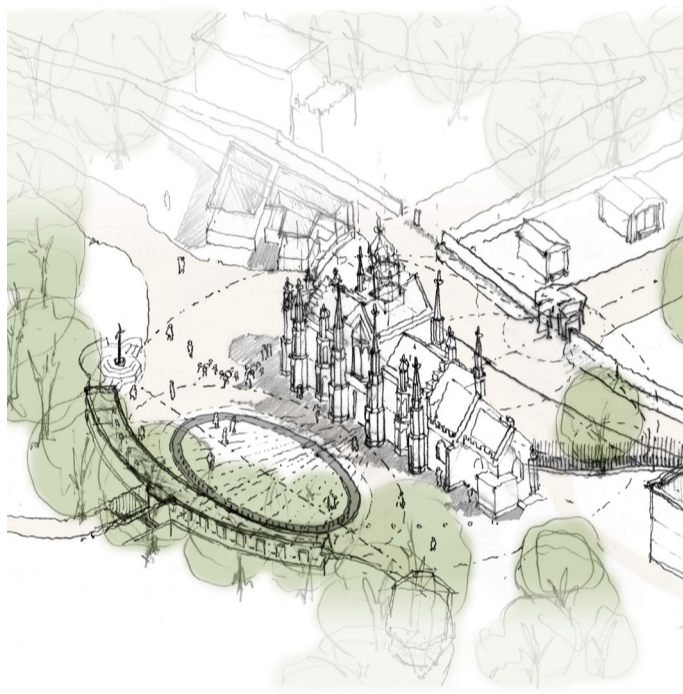


West Scott Architects, working for Hopkins, have prepared designs for the reinstatement of the missing features of the chapels.

New buildings and public spaces

Facilities for the increasing number of visitors are tired and insufficient. The gardeners' accommodation is too small and their store, a rusty shipping container, is an eyesore. There is hardly any room for our volunteers and the offices are overcrowded.

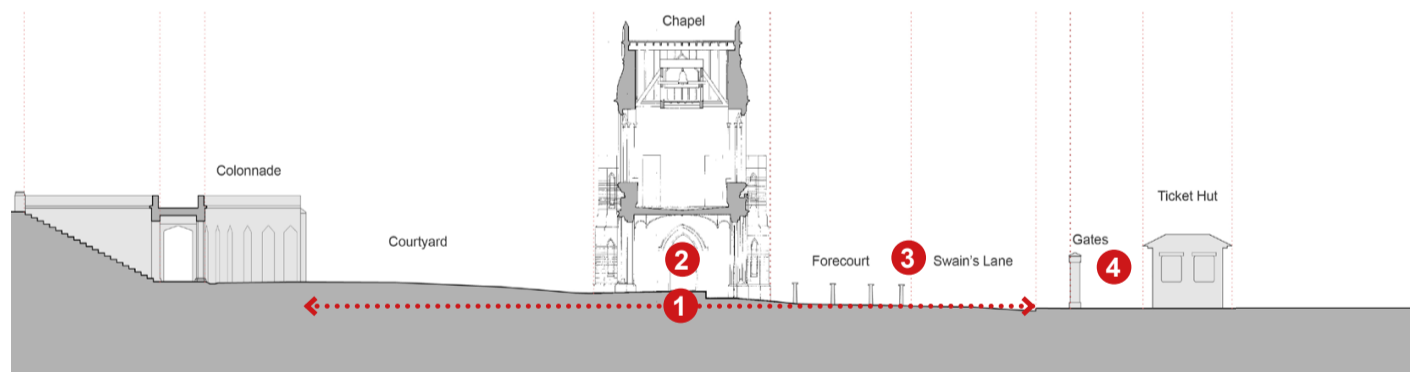
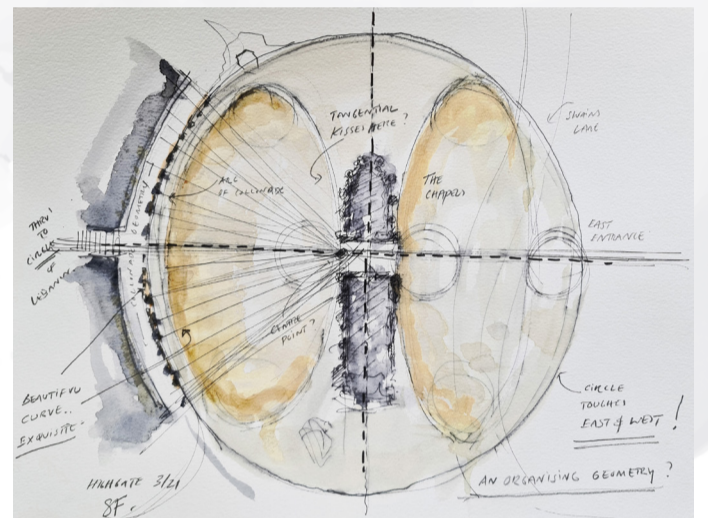
New facilities, such as a multifunctional classroom — exhibition space, would open up many opportunities.



Creating a sense of arrival

Hopkins have investigated the underlying geometry of the courtyard and Colonnade.

The Swain's Lane forecourt will be improved. Pedestrians will be prioritised, new surfaces incorporated and pavements widened. This will tie the different entrances together unifying the East and West sides as one 'Highgate Cemetery', with step-free access making it easier for all to visit. This new space will open up to guide and welcome visitors, transporting them from the world of the everyday to a tranquil place of reflection.



A cemetery for everyone

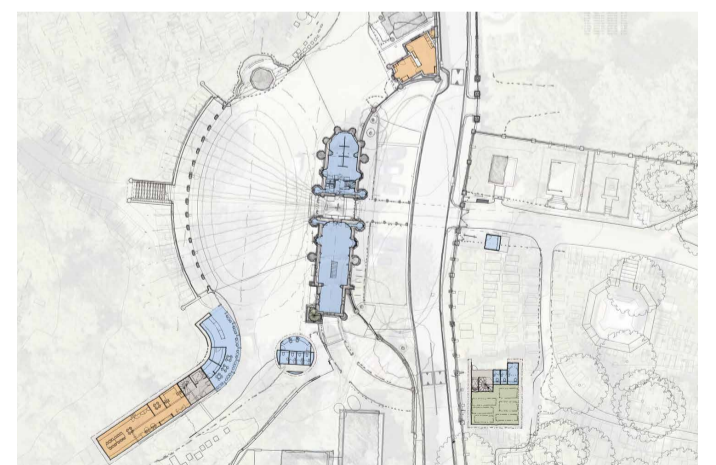
Hopkins Architects have identified three distinct cemetery user groups: visitors and grave owners; gardeners and maintenance staff; and operations staff and volunteers. Each group has their own needs and requires different kinds of space.

Many different configurations are being explored. The diagrams here show just two.



Idea A:

A new East side building for office accommodation
Two West side buildings; one for visitor ticketing, operations, the other for gardener accommodation.



Idea B:

A new East side building for gardener accommodation.
A larger West side building for visitor ticketing, shop and café, operations and possible multi-functional space

- Cemetery visitors
- Garden and Maintenance staff
- Operations staff and volunteers

Grave renewal

It is over 180 years since the first burial at Highgate Cemetery, and there is very little space which is not already occupied by graves. Other old cemeteries have closed to new burials and begun gradually losing importance to people living around them. Highgate Cemetery has a different future.

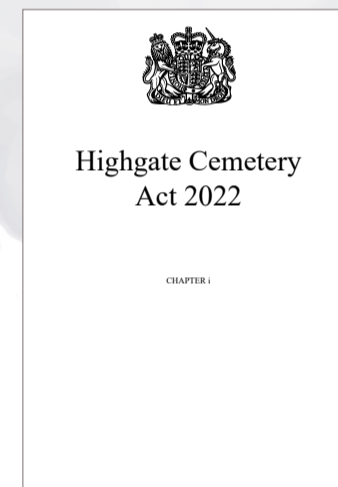


Highgate Cemetery Act

The Highgate Cemetery Act 2022 gives the Trust the power to take back long-unused graves to provide burial space for the needs of the present generation, and thereby assure the future of the Cemetery.

There are numerous safeguards to protect the interests of owners and the relatives of those buried in graves.

Renewal plans will be well publicised.

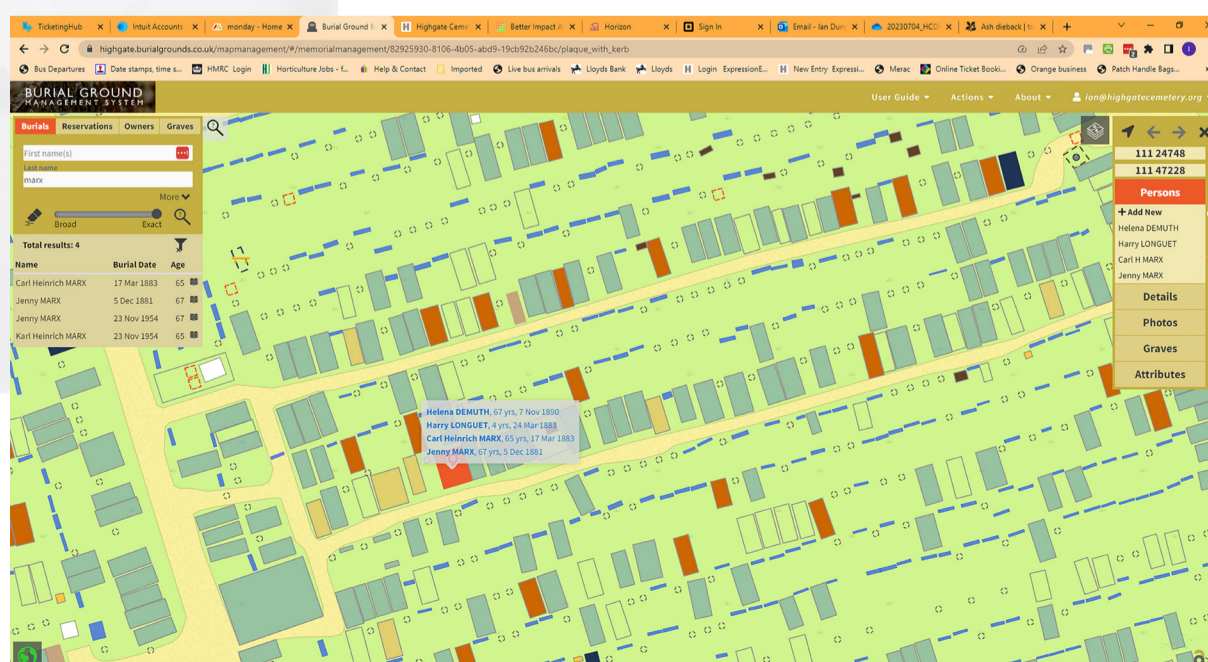
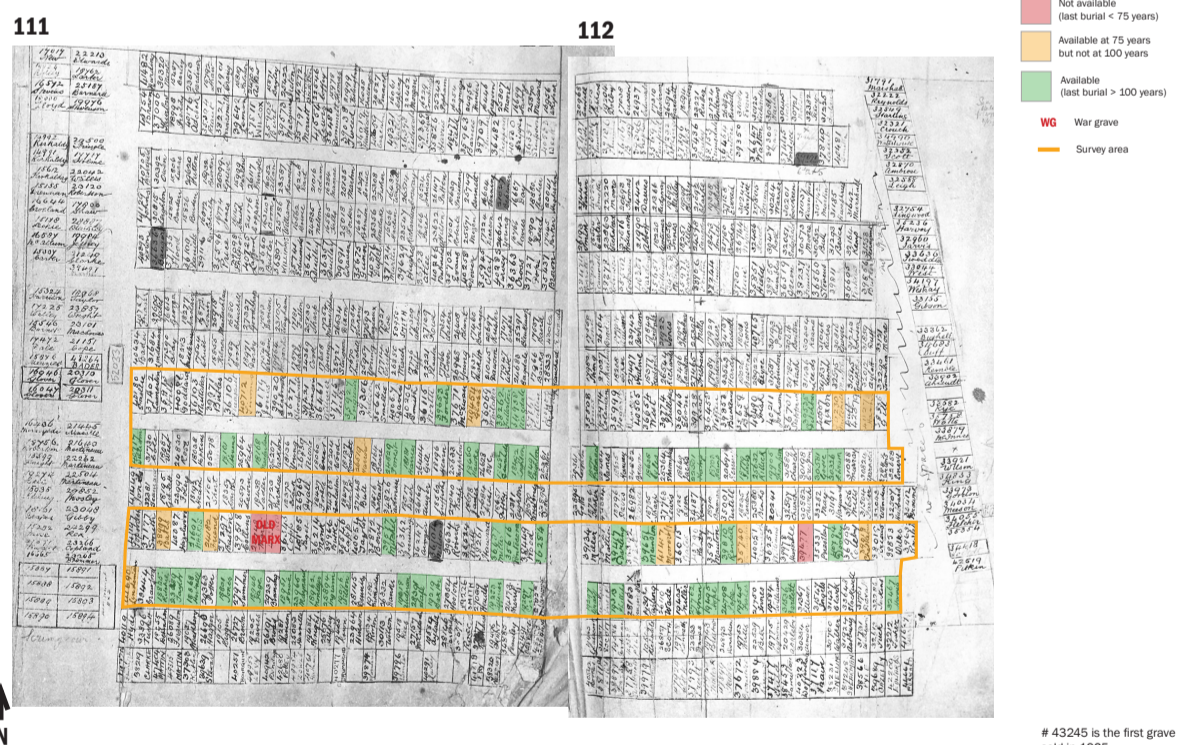


A sample area

An area near the old Marx grave in the East side of the cemetery has been investigated for its potential to provide additional burial space. This is unconsecrated ground.

Graves without memorials in the front rows could be considered for renewal. They would be accessible by the narrow footpath.

A total of 51 graves have been identified for further consideration.



Online burial records

We want people to be able easily to find out if they have relatives buried here whose graves might be affected by the renewal programme.

We have made Highgate Cemetery's burial records available online for anyone to search, free of charge. Visit our website and look for the grave searches section.

If you want to let us know that you are interested in a grave which you do not own, you can log your details on our website at:

highgatecemetery.org/future

An outward-looking place

Activities

To ensure Highgate Cemetery is serving everyone in the local community, the Trust is looking to diversify the types of activities that take place and reach new audiences who may have not visited before.

Activities will benefit people by offering opportunities to improve health and wellbeing, learn new skills or research and uncover histories of people buried here.

Activities will be planned sensitively, always mindful that Highgate Cemetery is still an active burial ground.

The new multi-functional spaces proposed for the cemetery will help facilitate the activities planned to create an enjoyable and rewarding experience for all who visit.



Principles and priorities

Invite and welcome

- Attract (a wider range of) visitors
- Make more people feel at home at Highgate Cemetery
- Minimise barriers to access

Resonate

- Ground and connect with global and universal ideas
- Make these local and universal
- Connect with visitors' everyday needs and experience
- Expand the range of stories told

Nurture

- Support everyday community needs (physical, emotional, intellectual)
- Collaborate with community partners to add further value to their work

Evolve

- Allow for growth
- Build capacity
- Diversify the range of people involved in decision making/delivery
- Become more open, responsive and connected as an organisation

Achievable sustainability aspirations

The Trust aims to become more sustainable in its operations. It has identified seven key themes.

Energy & Carbon

Net zero carbon estate by 2030

Materials & Waste

Zero waste to landfill

Trees & Biodiversity

Enhanced biodiversity

Water & resilience

Designed for the 2050 climate

Culture & Wellbeing

A place for tranquillity and reflection

Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility

A welcoming place that speaks to the whole community

Partnerships & Outreach

Strong local partnerships

Focus Areas:

Buildings

Landscape

Burials

Visitors

Operations

Looking ahead

To conserve a site that is nearly 200 years old takes much time and careful consideration. Our ideas are being thoughtfully developed in collaboration with the design team, and will ensure that the cemetery remains open throughout.

2017

Consultation exhibition about Highgate Cemetery's future

2020

International competition for landscape architects and architects

2021

Highgate Cemetery competition winners announced

2022

Highgate Cemetery Act allows the reuse of graves

Highgate Cemetery can continue to function as an active cemetery and renew graves

2023

Summer exhibition on the draft proposals

An application will be submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the realisation of the conservation project

2024

Planning applications submitted

The Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust hopes to be ready to submit a planning application

Phasing

With very little space and a complex landscape filled with over 173,000 graves, any change to Highgate Cemetery will take careful planning and phasing.

The types of works and sequencing are dependent on the outcome of funding and planning applications.

Work will be sequenced considering both the level of criticality and feasibility of implementation. It is expected work will start with landscape and conservation, followed by larger construction projects.

These works will take time and cannot be rushed. The conservation project will be implemented over the next 25 years.

Involving people

A community liaison group (CLG) has been established to bring in other voices from the local community. The CLG is a space for exchange where participants are both informed about and contribute to ideas for the cemetery conservation process. Each participant has been invited based on their role within a local group or for the special interests they represent. This includes representatives from:

- Lauderdale House
- Friends of Waterlow Park
- Whittington Estate RA
- Highgate Neighbourhood Forum
- Friends of Highgate Library
- Brookfield Primary School
- Holly Lodge
- OmVed Gardens

Each session has a different focus and the architects, landscape architects, activity planners and sustainability consultants have contributed directly, sharing information and design proposals.



Volunteers

Volunteers are a vital part of the cemetery operations. Tour guides make its history come alive for visitors, visitor assistants welcome visitors, sell tickets and answer questions, and gardening volunteers ensure that Highgate Cemetery continues to look its best, come rain or shine.

Throughout the conservation project, volunteer workshops will be run to ensure the wealth of volunteer knowledge is captured and feeds directly into the design of new facilities and landscapes.

Feedback:

We welcome your feedback on the conservation project ideas to help inform our design process. You can share your views and stay up to date with developments to the project at:

highgatecemeteryconservation.com



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HIGHGATE CEMETERY.

THE FAMILY GRAVE OF
MR. JOHN WELLS
OF HAMPTON ROAD